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Celebrate National Public Health Week April 1-7
Public Health is ROI: Save Money. Save Lives.

2013 County Health Rankings Detail Health Disparities in the Healthiest State

BURLINGTON – Vermont has been ranked #1 healthiest in *America's Health Rankings* for many years in a row. But Vermonters are not equally healthy, as reported in the latest *County Health Rankings* by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Now available at www.countyhealthrankings.org, the 2013 report ranks Chittenden County as the healthiest in the state, and Essex and Orleans Counties as least healthy. The rankings are based on health outcomes – length of life and quality of life – and health factors such as smoking, alcohol use, physical activity, access to quality health care, income, education, employment and the built environment.

“We know from research that income and education are strong predictors of health,” said Heather Danis, director for the Burlington district office of the Health Department. “The relatively higher average income and education levels in Chittenden County contribute to our strong showing in the rankings. But the bounty of good health is not shared equally by all populations within Chittenden County.”

Regional planning is being used to decrease health disparities in Chittenden County. The vision of the ECOS Plan (the draft regional plan for Chittenden County found at ecosproject.com), is a healthy, inclusive and prosperous community. Towns can use the data and recommendations in the ECOS Plan to improve the health of their residents and communities. For example, a map that shows areas of the county with high rates of poverty and no supermarket access can be used to prioritize where to locate a farmer's market.

“Health starts in our families, in our schools and workplaces, in our playgrounds and parks, and in the air we breathe and the water we drink. The conditions in which we live and work have an enormous impact on our health,” said Danis.

Among the findings for Chittenden County in the 2013 *County Health Rankings*:

- 20% of adults report excessive drinking.

- 12% of adults smoke.
- 15% of adults report they are physically inactive.
- 4% report limited access to healthy foods.

The *County Health Rankings* rank the overall health of nearly every county in all 50 states. Nationally, the data revealed that unhealthy counties have more than twice the rate of premature deaths than healthy ones and childhood poverty rates are twice as high in unhealthy counties. The *Rankings* allow counties to see how they compare to other counties within the state based on a range of factors that influence health.

Celebrate Health during National Public Health Week

During National Public Health Week April 1-7, the Vermont Department of Health will highlight the daily work of public health, and will launch *Healthy Vermonters 2020* – the state health assessment that documents the health status of Vermonters at the start of the decade, and sets the goals that will guide the work of public health through 2020.

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